

General Examination in Ethnomusicology

(Friday, August 13, 2010, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.)

Part I: World Music

A. Two Essays (two hours)

Answer TWO of the following three long essays (one hour each)

1. Use the cases of Tamil diaspora (especially in Sri Lanka) and South Asian diaspora in the West Indies to comment more broadly on the contributions of ethnomusicological research to diaspora studies. What is well known? What potential contributions have not yet been richly explored in these two cases?
2. Compare Hindustani and Karnatak approaches to raga elaboration (and/or the conception of particular ragas). What have scholars such as Powers, Widdess, Viswanathan, and Rowell contributed to our understanding of contemporary and historical practices?
3. Discuss the role of competitive musical performance during Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago, or in other Caribbean countries, in tourism and local politics. Cite specific genres, performers, historical events/reports, and scholars who have written about them.

B. Shorter questions. Select four from the following six items (1 hour inclusive)

1. mukhra
2. cantam
3. Robert Redfield
4. William Jones
5. kadans
6. kase

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Friday, August 13, 2010, 2 p.m.–5 p.m.

Part II: General Ethnomusicology

A. Two Essays (1 hour each)

Answer TWO of the following three long essays (one hour each)

1. Discuss the role of timbre in contemporary ethnomusicological research. What are the social, analytical, and linguistic potentials of studying timbre? To what extent does timbre deserve a place comparable to melody and rhythm in the study of all music? Cite specific musical traditions and the arguments of specific scholars
2. In their engagement with the social dimensions of musical life, ethnomusicologists have only occasionally researched and written about the roles of individuals. Discuss the dialectic between the individual and the collective, citing relevant literature; be sure to include details of at least two important biographies or prominent case studies by ethnomusicologists.
3. Discuss the ways methodologies for ethnomusicological research are adapting to the broader range of topics ethnomusicologists now study.

B. Shorter questions Select four from the following six items. (1 hour inclusive)

1. khoomii
2. flag song
3. mbira dzavadzimu
4. “free rhythm”
5. blown fifths
6. Rulan C Pian

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Monday, August 16, 2010, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.

Part III: Interdisciplinary Approaches

Two essays (three hours)

Answer TWO of the following three long essays (1.5 hours each)

1. Consider one musical case study of your choice from the perspective of Saussurian-based and Peircian-based models. Feel free to use secondary models derived from these sources, but be sure to discuss Saussure and Peirce's own work as well. Compare the insights of the two approaches. What problems remain unaddressed or underaddressed?
2. Use Bakhtin's notions of speech genre and dialog to comment on, rethink or critique a musical ethnography
3. In what areas of research on gender and sexuality have ethnomusicologists innovated and in what areas do ethnomusicological approaches to gender lag behind other fields? Be sure to refer to specific sources from across the disciplines and from ethnomusicology to support your major points.

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Wednesday, August 18, 2010, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Part IV: Analysis – Part A

In your commentary about the recorded example, you should feel free to engage any aspects of the piece that interest you—e.g., tonal or timbral detail, rhythm, “form” or the emergence of events, ensemble interaction, virtuosity, improvisation, repetition, style—but please attempt to show connections among whatever aspects you choose to discuss.

You may provide, but are not required to do so, any analytical examples you deem appropriate, such as charts or musical transcriptions. If you do transcribe, you are not required to transcribe the entire piece!

You may consult the ethnomusicological literature for historical or contextual information if you wish to do so, but this is not required and should not be the focus of your analysis.

Recording information:

Singers: Ranjani and Gayathri

Violin: H. N. Bhaskar

Mridangam: Manoj Siva

9 March 2003, Wong auditorium, MIT, Cambridge, MA

Rāgam-tānam-pallavi, Shanmugapriya rāga, khaṇḍa naḍai
tripuṭa tāla

(rāgamalika section: śriranjani, vasanta,
amrithavarshini, and kāpi)

Text (Tamil): vēlai ivvēlai tutipatu en vēlai sivakumāran
vaṭi-(vēlai)

வேலை இவ்வேளை துதிப்பது ஏன் வேலை சிவகுமாரன் வடி. . .(வேலை)

Translation (roughly): It is my task at this time to worship the sharp lance of the son of Siva (or to worship Sivakumaran, the lance-wielder)

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Thursday, August 19, 2010, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Part IV: Analysis – Part B

Please choose between:

String Quartet Op. 76, No. 4: Adagio, **Franz Joseph Haydn**

Agon: Bransle Gay, **Igor Stravinsky**

Comment analytically on your selection. Your discussion may include brief references to such broad aspects as style, genre, quotations, and historical context, but should focus primarily on providing an analysis of the work. In this analysis, it is less important to give a measure-by-measure account of the entire work than to focus analytically on salient points in the score (discussing meter, harmony, melody, texture, form, etc.) that are relevant to the piece as a whole. You are encouraged to make use of annotated musical examples wherever it helps clarify your argument or substantiate your observations. No reference to secondary literature and library materials is expected for this part of the exam. Scores are provided and recordings of these pieces are available on reserve in the library and online through the Classical Music Library and Naxos. You may, of course also use a piano in the process of studying the score.